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**Special theme: Millennium Development Goals and indigenous peoples**

## Information received from Governments

### Note by the Secretariat

**Addendum****

### Guatemala

*Summary*

This report contains information on the actions undertaken in recent years by the State of Guatemala with regard the Millennium Development Goals — eradicating extreme poverty and achieving universal primary education — in order to address the special theme proposed for the fourth session of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues.

The report analyses a number of the reasons for the economic, social and political exclusion of indigenous peoples, such as the lack of rural development, unemployment, the lack of essential services, poor quality housing and discrimination as well as the difficulties associated with access to education. It describes a number of actions initiated by the Social Investment Fund and the Guatemalan Fund for Indigenous Development, institutions responsible for finding ways of eradicating extreme poverty by investing in the country's infrastructure and rural development. The actions undertaken by the Ministry of Education with a view to improving educational infrastructure and quality are also set forth in detail.

* E/C.19/2005/1.
** The present document was submitted late to ensure the inclusion of the most recent information.

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## Main goals

### Goal 1
### Poverty eradication

1. As part of its policy for the new decade, the State of Guatemala has given careful consideration to the causes of indigenous peoples' economic, social and political exclusion and is of the opinion that they are influenced by a number of factors, including income, ethnicity, place of residence, gender and age, that are attributable to the lack of rural development.

2. The level of income concentration is extremely high: 64 per cent of income is earned by the wealthiest group and 1.7 per cent by the poorest group. All the factors mentioned above can be attributed to colonial practices which still persist in some spheres of Guatemalan life. Consequently, ways must be found to counteract their effects, which undermine the establishment of a democratic nation.

3. According to statistics, most of the population of 11.2 million is currently affected by poverty. Fifty-seven per cent of households are living in poverty and 21.5 per cent in extreme poverty. Space distribution in urban and rural areas has an influence on access to opportunities for human development. For every 100 inhabitants, 60 live in rural areas where precarious employment, the lack of basic services and poor quality housing are more prevalent. Disadvantages are also more marked among the indigenous population, women and vulnerable age groups such as children, young people and the elderly.

4. Furthermore, poverty levels are higher among those who do not have access to basic services. According to the most recent census, seven out of ten indigenous households live in poverty and, of those seven, three live in extreme poverty. In comparison, four out of ten non-indigenous households live in poverty and one in extreme poverty.

5. With regard to the results achieved or actions undertaken by the State to respond to the problems currently facing indigenous peoples, some outward and symbolic progress has been made. However, for economic reasons, that progress has not been sustainable and the infrastructure that would allow for the achievement of results is lacking.

6. It can also be said that the State has failed to achieve better results owing to the lack of well-defined strategies that provide for the involvement of the communities affected and the development of State policies specifically designed to solve the problems affecting society. Accordingly, many of the causes of those problems have now been studied and addressed with long-term programmes for eradicating poverty and extreme poverty. This is because the Government changes every four years, meaning that new actions and programmes are developed and previous ones are not followed up.

7. Through its various institutions, the State of Guatemala has made significant progress and has obtained some results from the implementation of projects and programmes to eradicate poverty in rural areas. A number of actions designed to assist indigenous peoples are described below.

(a) Agricultural and development programmes have been implemented in order to stimulate production, generate jobs and improve living conditions in the hope of counteracting extreme poverty and hunger;

(b) Anti-hunger campaigns and programmes have been launched, thereby raising awareness of the issue among the population;

(c) Infrastructures (roads, electricity, drinking water, schools, health centres, etc.) have been improved in rural areas, thereby improving the population's standard of living.

8. Unemployment is related to the drop in the price of commodities, such as coffee, which led to job losses and increased poverty levels.

9. The institutions charged with seeking ways of eradicating extreme poverty, whose funds are used partly for investment in infrastructure and rural development, include:

**Social Investment Fund**

10. The Social Investment Fund is the institution responsible for acknowledging, assessing and investing in the social development of indigenous peoples. It works to promote the fight against poverty and extreme poverty and the development of indigenous communities.

11. Thus, through this institution, whose primary objective is to ensure the social welfare of communities, the State of Guatemala engages in social investment. On average, the Fund's annual budget is 400 million quetzales. This amount is intended for investment in order to overcome rural poverty, which, for the most part, as mentioned above, affects indigenous people.

12. All the programmes in the Fund's project inventory focus on poverty eradication in rural areas, which are home to most indigenous people, thereby eliminating discrimination and providing for development and self-determination.

13. Several of the Fund's most significant achievements are described below:

14. Sixteen microregions have been created in order to assist the predominantly indigenous rural population in, inter alia, Alta Verapaz, El Quiché and Área Ch'orti' de Chiquimula. Workshops and seminars were held as part of these activities to provide training on gender and ethnic equity issues to Fund staff.

15. The Fund carries out a number of important functions, including activities designed to assist rural communities. These activities are related to the fight against racial discrimination.

16. Consideration has been given to creating organized social capital by strengthening the capacity of indigenous communities for development and to creating or improving human capital: schools, health centres, and social services in indigenous communities without coverage (communities without benefits from other sources). Consideration must also be given to creating economic capital: roads, irrigation systems, storage facilities, vocational training and production credit for indigenous groups and communities.

17. In terms of impact, socio-economic and political participation has increased, and progress has been made towards eliminating inequalities and achieving ethnic equity.

18. In accordance with the obligations incumbent upon the State of Guatemala, the Fund requires, in all communities, women to participate in assemblies, express their own needs and desires and sit on boards of directors.

**Guatemalan Fund for Indigenous Development**

19. As a bipartite organ and in accordance with its mandate, if any significant issue arises that affects indigenous people involved in the projects that it supports, the Fund conducts consultations with indigenous organizations and community representatives in order to give its work new direction. Projects supported by the Fund must, as a minimum requirement, include a gender perspective.

20. The results achieved include the active participation of indigenous women in the implementation of community projects. Such participation is also an important indicator in the approval of such projects.

21. With a view to improving services and access to indigenous communities, the number of outreach workers in each region has been increased in order to focus more attention on the projects.

22. The Analysis Unit is working to implement a strategic plan that will incorporate elements of the fight against racial discrimination into the Fund's activities at the national level. This appears to be a positive initiative that will require follow-up.

23. The Fund's trademark is to add value to the implementation of projects by achieving tangible development in indigenous communities.

24. The Fund's four programmes (education, social production, health and infrastructure) promote the rights of indigenous peoples, in accordance with the Peace Agreements. The projects funded under those programmes are designed to increase employment and job opportunities.

25. Efforts are also being made to create better conditions for development in urban and rural areas, reduce the rates of poverty and extreme poverty, establish production projects and social infrastructure, promote a policy of decentralization on the basis of constitutional principles, strengthen local authorities and instil respect for municipal autonomy, and implement mechanisms to enhance the transparency of local and national administration.

26. Citizen participation is encouraged in order to strengthen local authorities and ensure universal access to education, rural housing, community infrastructures and food aid to support the consolidation of peace.

**Goal 2**
**Achieving universal primary education**

27. In the context of this objective, the second Millennium Development Goal consists in ensuring that, by 2015, all boys and girls worldwide are able to complete a full course of primary education.

28. The most relevant data obtained, whose indicators are detailed below, are:

- Net enrolment ratio in primary education
- Proportion of pupils starting grade 1 who reach grade 5
- Literacy rate of 15-24 year-olds

*Significant progress on the part of the Ministry of Education*

29. The Ministry of Education has been carrying out substantive actions over recent years designed to meet the country's educational needs. These actions were readjusted, strengthened and expanded in 2004 and, in their entirety, also address the fulfilment of the targets established in the Millennium Development Goals.

30. The following are significant advances in this respect:

*Support and infrastructure services*

- Regular food through the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Food
- More than 8 million items of equipment through the *Maratón des Lápiz* (Pencil Marathon)
- Allocation of more than 500 million quetzales for school services for 2005 (equipment, teaching aids, minor repairs, school meals, scholarships and textbooks)
- Design of the school infrastructure and maintenance policy
- Start of school census (1/3 under way)
- 200 schools through the Friends of the School programme
- Agreements with social funds
- Restructuring of standard federation schools

*Human resources*

- Establishment of procedures for teacher selection and recruitment by contract (13, 000 teachers)
- Agreement with municipalities
- 3, 000 posts filled per year
- Modernization of teachers' information system

*Educational quality*

- *Salvemos el Primer Grado* (Let's Save Grade 1): reduction in the repetition rate of children in grade 1 of primary education from 32 per cent to 25 per cent
- 1,000 mini-libraries: *Libros por Amor* (Books for Love)
- Intercultural bilingual education: employment of bilingual teachers in the first grades of primary education
- Diagnostic evaluation for students in the final grade of comprehensive school, strengthening of out-of-school education

- Prize for excellence for seminars in the final grade of comprehensive school (theme: national identity in the framework of diversity)

*New management model*

- Educational vision:

  Participation and dialogue with politicians, the Government and civil society: a new vision for the twenty-first century, long-term targets, definitions of competence, budgetary analysis for 10 years (based on targets), general outline for the new education law.

31. Obviously, the measures developed during 2004 have not yet managed to meet the needs that have accumulated over decades. Fundamental measures are therefore envisaged for 2005, such as:

*Coverage*

- Raising the 2004-2007 educational targets (from 92 per cent to 94 per cent in primary education)
- Long-term plan (targets and funding), work by departments and with education boards

*Educational quality*

- Teacher training
- Establishment, simplification and dissemination of standards by grade at the primary level
- Secondary education reform proposal (early secondary schools, comprehensive schools, teacher-training colleges), school policies
- Proposal for and discussion of the professionalization of primary schoolteachers
- Pilot schools for the future
- Establishment of the Evaluation and Research Institute
- Scholarships (for the poorest and the best students)
- Resumption of intercultural bilingual education

*New management model*

- Restructuring of the central administration: ISO 9000
- Redesigning of processes
- Management of human resources: 3,000 teachers budgeted, review of teacher selection, recruitment and evaluation procedures
- Management by objectives
- Discussion of the legal framework with Congress and teachers for the legal reform of the education sector

32. Other educational developments achieved:

- Establishment of the General Directorate of Intercultural Bilingual Education
- Establishment of the Vice-Ministry for Intercultural Bilingual Education at the Ministry of Education
- Establishment of the intercultural bilingual education offices at departmental level
- Establishment of curriculums with cultural relevance
- Establishment of intercultural bilingual-education teacher-training colleges
- Legislative Decree No. 81-2002, Act on Promoting Education against Discrimination
- The Ministry of Education established Ministerial Agreement No. 930, dated 24 November 2003: "All public and private educational establishments shall promote and respect the use of indigenous dress by students, teachers, technical personnel and administrative staff in teaching, civic, social, formal and other activities without any restriction." Consequently, any behaviour or activity limiting this right is prohibited
- Governmental Agreement 526-2003, establishing the Third Vice-Ministry for Intercultural Bilingual Education
- Governmental Agreement 22-04, generalization of intercultural bilingual education in national education
- Resolution item 13-2004, obligation for students in the final year to prepare seminars on discrimination and racism
- Legislative Decree 7-99, Act for the Advancement and Integral Promotion of Women, which affords indigenous female students the option of continuing using their dress at school

33. Recognizing the illiteracy problem in rural areas, especially among the indigenous populations, and the efforts that the Ministry of Education has made to promote education, the Guatemalan State, anxious to improve bilingual education in rural areas, now has 18,000 indigenous schoolteachers in the national teaching profession out of a total of 81,000 schoolteachers in the system. The State recognizes that actions need to be taken in the short and medium term for the implementation of measures designed to reduce illiteracy. An important fact to bear in mind is that in Guatemala there are three quarters of a million Maya-speaking children from 5 to 12 years old.

34. Given the country's present economic situation, it has not been possible to increase the budget of the General Directorate of Intercultural Bilingual Education, owing to the fact that priorities in other areas have greater importance and national impact. However, the progressive increase in the General Directorate's economic requirements is being taken into account in the implementation of its activities, as well as the need for the support and cooperation of international organizations.

35. In view of the fact that half of the indigenous population is illiterate (whereas illiteracy among the non-indigenous population is only at 20 per cent) and that it is women who are most affected by the system (particularly indigenous women living

in rural areas, where 7 out of 10 women are illiterate), the Guatemalan State has taken steps to reduce such large gaps: there are currently 7,832 schools in departments with an indigenous population and, in particular, 1,869 with bilingual teaching.

36. Average school enrolment for the young mestizo population of both sexes between 15 and 24 years is seven years, equivalent to the first grade of secondary education. In contrast, for young indigenous men it is 4.7 years, which is below the fifth grade of primary education, and 3.5 years for young indigenous women, which is below the fourth grade of primary education. For every 200 children, 100 indigenous and 100 non-indigenous, 21 indigenous and 10 non-indigenous children do not attend primary school.

37. In the national education system, as in many other areas, the desire to implement the Peace Accords is being taken into account, specifically with regard to educational reform in Guatemala.

*Important data to be taken into account*

*Literacy*

38. Among the population of seven years and over, a person is considered literate who knows how to read and write a simple paragraph in Spanish or another language. The status of literacy was investigated among the population aged seven years and over. The number of literate persons increased to 51.1 per cent over the period 1994-2002, with a greater increase among women than men (55.7 per cent and 47 per cent, respectively). According to the 2002 census, one in every three women and one in every four men is illiterate.

39. Among the population group aged 15 to 64 years, the proportion of literate persons stands at 71.5 per cent and that of illiterate persons at 28.5 per cent. Out of the total number of illiterate persons (1,708, 522), 36.8 per cent (629,493) are men and 61.2 per cent (1,079, 029) are women. During the period 1994-2002, the number of literate persons 15 to 64 years of age showed a 49 per cent increase, with a higher number among women than men (55 per cent and 45 per cent, respectively). Approximately one in every three women and one in every five men are illiterate.

*Enrolment rate in urban areas*

40. The 2002 census shows that 48.2 per cent of urban inhabitants have completed some grade of primary education, 27.1 per cent have reached some grade of secondary education, and 7 per cent have had university studies. Ten percent have taken pre-primary studies, and 16.7 per cent of the population concerned have not completed any grade.

*School attendance*

41. Of the population aged 7 years and over, approximately one in every three persons attends an educational establishment, with higher attendance among men than women. According to the 1994 census, the percentage of school attendance among men was 55.1 per cent and according to the 2002 census it was 51.8 per cent, whereas the figures for women were 44.9 per cent and 48.2 per cent, respectively.

42. Based on the above information obtained directly from the Ministry of Education, this Commission is concerned by the silence over the suspension of the programme for the professionalization of schoolteachers in employment, the discontinuation of the restructuring of teacher-training colleges and the failure to mention the implementation of the proposal for curriculum change in the framework of the implementation of educational reform.